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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1316
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1546
RUEHAR/AMEMBASSY ACCRA 1404
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1550
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0219
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0813
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1176
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1605
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4009
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1375
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 2033
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0675
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1767
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000269

SIPDIS

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AF/S FOR S. HILL
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
USAID FOR M. COPSON AND E. LOKEN
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/30/2017
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ASEC](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: MDC UNDER SIEGE: ABDUCTIONS, ARRESTS, GOVERNMENT
PROPAGANDA

REF: A. A. HARARE 00254

[1](#)B. B. 06 HARARE 00297
[1](#)C. C. TD-314/19625-07

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell under Section 1.5 b/d

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Assailants believed to be government agents have abducted and beaten at least nine opposition supporters since March 3. Additionally, the police reported 35 opposition activists were in custody following a series of raids, including on MDC headquarters March 28. Human rights lawyers said police were detaining as many as 100. There were reports that many of the detainees were badly beaten by police. The Herald and other GOZ mouthpieces have attempted to spin the arrests as part of a GOZ battle against terrorism. Most Zimbabweans see this for what it is -- an attempt to blame the victims for the continuing violence in Zimbabwe. End Summary.

Government Violence and Intimidation Continues

[1](#)2. (C) Assailants believed to be government agents have abducted and beaten at least nine opposition supporters since March 3, including Last Maengahama, a member of the MDC national executive, who was taken at gun point from a

shopping center shortly after the March 27 memorial service for the opposition activist killed by police. Frances Lovemore, director of Counseling Services Unit (CSU), told us that the abductions and assaults were most likely carried out by a "hit squad" of ZANU-PF thugs (Reftel A).

13. (U) The government's continuing assault on the opposition also included early morning raids on the homes of several MDC leaders. Police arrested Tsvangirai adviser Ian Makone and his wife Theresa and reportedly confiscated two guns. Police also arrested MDC activist Piniel Denga and claimed to have found explosives and bomb making materials. Additionally, an undetermined number of MDC supporters were detained. One unconfirmed story received from an American NGO reports eyewitness accounts of a man being shot dead by police outside MDC headquarters in Harvest House during Wednesday's raids.

14. (SBU) As of today, the number of opposition activists detained by police, including those arrested in the March 28 invasion of MDC headquarters, remained unconfirmed as lawyers continued to be denied access to their clients. The government-controlled newspaper The Herald reported on March 29 that 35 opposition activists were in custody. Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR) lawyer Otto Saki told us on March 30 that the number of detainees could be as high as 100 based on the number of opposition activists that remained unaccounted for. Saki also said that there were rumors that police had released 30 detainees on March 29, but ZLHR lawyers had yet to speak with any of those supposedly released.

15. (SBU) Nine of those detained appeared in court on March

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29; Theresa Makone and Denga were among the group. Ian Makone appeared on the charge list but was not present. Theresa Makone told the British poloff that Ian Makone and other detainees were badly beaten by police. A Harare FSN told us that both of Ian Makone's hands were broken during the beatings, but Theresa Makone was not beaten. Detainees faced charges of illegal possession of weapons and attempted murder in connection with alleged recent petrol bombings. They were remanded to custody pending further court proceedings on March 30.

So Does Propaganda Campaign

16. (SBU) In an attempt to paint the opposition as violent and to justify the government's brutal response, the government daily The Herald splashed photos of two handguns, several cans of spray paint and various unidentified objects purportedly confiscated in the raids on the MDC under its March 30 headline - "Police nab 35 MDC activists, confiscate arms, explosives." The article claimed that the activists arrested were the primary suspects behind the recent "spate of terror bombings" being carried out by the MDC's violent "underground cells" known as the "Democratic Resistance Committees."

Comment

17. (S/NF) Our interlocutors have universally told us that most Zimbabweans have seen through the GOZ's lies and attempts to blame the victims of violence for its own depredations. One reason is that the GOZ's propaganda efforts are simply pathetic. The front page Herald photograph, under its lurid headline of weapons seized showed two pistols. This is reminiscent of last year's arrests in Mutare of a former Rhodesian policeman, Peter Hitschmann, whom the government accused of supplying guns to the MDC (Reftel B). This case led to MDC Treasurer Roy Bennett's

fleeing the country and seeking asylum in South Africa. The photographic evidence in that case was equally laughable -- a handful of long guns and pistols)- about average for a Zimbabwean household. The concerted campaign of abductions, beatings and possibly killings appears to be the implementation of orders reported in Reftel C. End Comment.
DELL